

The Saundersian Method.

I am interested in noticing that immediately following Dr. Saunders' "Some Criticisms" there was as the heading of another article: "In Everything Give Thanks." In spite of the way he has done it, and because of the good I believe will come out of it, I cannot say how thankful I am that at last the Doctor has put into the MESSENGER AND VISITOR what is to some extent an open criticism. Following the example of the Doctor who went into the history of the class to suit his purpose, in my first article I went somewhat more fully into the same history to show that the Doctor had evaded the main question at issue between us.

It was a question of method. Dr. Saunders wanted us in our Bible Class to come to the study of the Bible with the assumption that its original writings were without mistakes. My method was to study it without assuming either that it was or that it was not infallible. In order that the question be fairly faced for two months we considered the subject: "What is the Bible and How Should it be Studied?" Instead of adopting any given definition of the Bible we went through the process of making one, and as a result looked upon the Bible as the "specially sacred" literature of Christianity. This brought us to the question of inspiration. Despite the Doctor's efforts he could not give us sufficient reason for assuming an inspiration that implied the inerrancy of even the original writings. We had to content ourselves therefore with seeking "a good working definition" that would commend itself to those who did not believe in the Bible's inerrancy and that would not be contrary to the views of those who did. We were thus left free for our work of taking what I have indicated as our first step in Bible study: "Getting the meanings the authors intended to convey." I may add in passing, that our study since has been according to this method.

Instead of frankly acknowledging his mistake, the Doctor, it seems, would turn away attention from his mistake by making an unfair criticism of a definition or two I gave to the class. Unfair though it be, as I shall show, I am glad that through it the opportunity for which I have for months been praying has come at last. I am sorry however if, in the interests of the method of Bible study for which I stand, a careful reviewing of the Doctor's article will reveal a number of indications that the Doctor possesses in an exceptionally high degree and uses the ability to so state a thing that the statement in itself is either true or one that only with difficulty can be shown to be more or less false, but which nevertheless by its insinuations, omissions, etc., leaves a wrong impression that is sometimes very wrong, and, where so much is at stake, even cruel. It is quite generally known that the Doctor is the "reporter" who in the MESSENGER AND VISITOR writes "From Halifax." Once when in the class the Doctor's attention was called to the quite common impression that in the MESSENGER AND VISITOR he was "hitting" the pastor as he had been "hitting" some one else a short time before, his quick reply was that no one could show that it was "necessarily" so. I replied then as I have felt right along, "Not 'necessarily' so, Doctor, but it would have been kinder if it had been."

If Doctor Saunders had only fairly and openly faced the issue, in my reply the one phrase that is so distasteful and even painful to me would not be necessary. Do not misjudge me because in order to correct the false impressions he has made I find it necessary, even at some length, to show the Saundersian method of opposition by means of which they have been made. I am sorry to have to go into details but as it has been by the avoiding of the main question and by the introduction of unnecessary minor things that Doctor Saunders has left his false impressions, the only course open to me (after showing as I did in my first article that he has dodged the issue) is to take up these minor things and by showing their insinuations, and by supplying their omissions, to correct the by no means minor misrepresentations that have been made through them.

In order that I do him no injustice I will quote him in full with the exceptions of his own quotations from others and his references to my brother ministers. First the title: *Some Criticisms of the Article by the Rev. H. F. Waring, M. A., which appeared in the last week's Messenger and Visitor, by Rev. E. M. Saunders, D. D.*

Nobody would deny that this title is true to the extent that among the criticisms in the article at the head of which it stands there is "by E. M. Saunders, D. D." at least one criticism of at least a small part of my article. It is true however that the first part (or nearly half) of the Doctor's article was concerning a definition not found in my article at all—a definition not even printed by me, and which (as I shall show later) would not have been printed by me just as it was. Not only is the first part of the Doctor's article concerning a definition not found in my article at all, but the rest of his article though it quotes more than one-fiftieth, nevertheless concerns itself almost entirely with one-fiftieth (and that not the most important) part of the article it purports to criticize. With a mere assumption it dodges the important question at issue between us—a question of method in Bible study—the question as to whether or not we are to assume an inspiration that implies the inerrancy of the original writings.

The Doctor's first paragraph reads: "The Rev. Mr.

Waring preached three sermons in the First Church, Halifax, on the Inspiration of the Bible, subsequently gave the substance of them in his Convention sermon, lectured on the same theme at another place, and then discussed the subject at length in his Bible class. Now we find his definition of the Inspiration of the Bible given to the denomination through the MESSENGER AND VISITOR."

I certainly did preach and lecture on the Inspiration of the Bible and, in the Bible class, especially through and by Doctor Saunders, this subject was discussed "at length" and a definition of Inspiration was undoubtedly given by me to the denomination through the MESSENGER AND VISITOR. It is true, but it is not the whole truth. Though in this case the matter is not of much moment, (though interestingly illustrative of the Saundersian method) yet in view of the use the Doctor later makes of this curtailed truth, it may be well to say that my full subject in preaching and lecturing was: "The Bible as Religious Literature—inspired and inspiring;" the full subject discussed in the class was: "What is the Bible and how should it be Studied?" and the definition given to the denomination took only about one-fiftieth part of the article which the Doctor purports to criticize. My article considered at some length the important question at issue between us, a question to which the Doctor in his long article simply alludes and which I hope he does not plan to thus elude.

The Doctor's second paragraph reads: "To forestall any incorrect impression, I wish to say that in my criticism of Brother Waring's views, it must not be inferred that our relations are strained. Quite otherwise. They are cordial. Brother Waring is a minister of exceptional gifts, of excellent Christian spirit and wholly devoted to his work. Knowing that I differed from him on the subject of the Inspiration of the Bible, he has repeatedly expressed the wish that I would criticize his views publicly, as I am now about to do."

This is a work of art. Let us begin our study of it with the last sentence first. It is true—but a truer impression will be left if it be made known that the great difference between Dr. Saunders and myself is that of method and that I personally (most pointedly and plainly) expressed the wish that the Doctor publicly consider with me this main question at issue between us. For the Doctor's public acknowledgement that "Brother Waring is a minister" "of excellent Christian spirit," I feel very thankful; for it is evidence to me that my earnest prayers for self control have not been altogether in vain. No man ever drove me to my knees for grace to mutely bear his method of opposition as has Doctor Saunders. I would that every reader of this article could have been in the class from the beginning of our special course until its close. Though after prayer and conference my object is to speak plainly, yet I do not want to make it any more unpleasant for the Doctor than is necessary. I shall therefore not describe the Doctor's bearing in the class unless it be necessary. I will also forbear speaking plainly concerning Doctor Saunders' representation of the "cordial" relations between us further than to say that his representation which I have quoted is exceedingly politic to say the least.

In the Doctor's third and fourth paragraphs we read: "At the conclusion of the discussion of the general subject in the Bible class, according to his promise, he gave the following reply to the question—one of the 25—"What is the Inspiration of the Bible?"

"By the Inspiration of the Bible, we mean that divine influencing of the Hebrews, Jews and early Christians, by virtue of which there was produced a literature, in revealing their religious conceptions, especially in and through Jesus Christ finds when viewed in the light of their times, a higher response within us, and produces a greater effect upon us and the world, than does any other literature."

As I wish to quote Doctor S. in full let me here insert a few sentences that come later in his article but which should be taken with the above. "Six weeks after this definition of 'What is the Inspiration of the Bible?' was given, another question and definition prepared by Brother Waring appeared in print, and which has been criticized by some of our representative ministers."

Two weeks after this version appeared, another one, in which further changes were made, was given to the public, by Brother Waring. The first one has been considered, the second I shall omit. The third one appears in Mr. Waring's article of last week; and is here reproduced, and also the several paragraphs which serve to modify it.

It will be seen that both the question and the answer differ from those first given."

Because of the necessity of beginning the study at once and the pressure of my regular work, the twenty five questions with which we began our work were prepared for the printer in an hour or two and so were modified (as was also the wording of the answers) as I proceeded with the teaching and subsequent work of writing and revising a summary. This I kept revising even up to the time of its publication in the MESSENGER AND VISITOR. One of the earlier modifications was the making of one question out of two. This, together with the fact, that largely through the Doctor's consumption of time, (part of which, however, was profitably consumed) we were unable to take up the last three questions, will explain why there are twenty one questions in the summary instead of the twenty five the doctor... incidentally—shows were originally given.

At the close of the series of lessons, I read very condensed and fragmentary answers to the questions we had been considering and in a few cases had been slightly modifying. Among these answers was the definition which Doctor Saunders has taken upon himself to put in public print. Let me say however, that while it cannot be said to be the definition I gave the class, it differs from the one I read,

only by the omission of the word "that" after the word "literature." In my notes (as I told the Doctor weeks before he took the liberty to put the definition into public print,) when I read the definition it was indicated that, later, there was to be supplied after the word "literature" a reference to the Bible. As I felt that such a reference was implied in the definition and I had not decided on the exact words to be supplied and had no thought that Doctor Saunders would put it into print, I let it go for the time.

The implied reference was supplied in the second definition which I had printed (the Doctor is interestingly definite in writing) "six weeks" later. This delay in preparing my summary was due not simply to my heavy threefold work of preacher, teacher and pastor, but also to a desire to prevent the Doctor from making an unfair use of the summary. In this I failed.

Though suggestively definite in writing about the time and that the second definition was printed, the doctor omitted to write that the first was not printed, and that he sent type written copies of it around to my brother ministers. He also omitted to say to what extent the second differed from the other and he also omitted the second definition. Why? Let me give it that you may see for yourselves. "It is, at least, that divine influencing of Hebrews, Jews and early Christians by virtue of which there was produced a literature, the Bible, that, in revealing their religious conceptions, and especially through Jesus Christ, has, when viewed in the light of their times, found a higher response within us and has produced a greater effect upon us and upon the world than has any other literature." In this definition I hesitated between the wording "the Bible" and "in the Bible." Either of these however is correct. If the Doctor had printed this definition its relation to the first would have been seen and he would have printed one which he could not take exception to as far as it goes.

The Doctor is careful to show that I changed my definition. Let me correct a false impression left by his suggestive statements. Let me say I stand by both of them—for as I have shown there are practically but two. I stand by both of them not only as true but as "good working definitions" for the purpose for which they were given. The reason the one referring to "specially sacred" writings, was substituted for the other was simply that it was shorter and more suggestive of the class method of making it. If either of the definitions must be taken out of its context and represented as my definition, the second would the better stand the ordeal. Is that the very reason Doctor Saunders omitted the second definition? The erroneous representation of the fact that different definitions were given is shown in the Saundersian article in last week's MESSENGER AND VISITOR and in which there was this Saundersian reference to me: "Evidently this scholarly thinker has not yet found an anchorage for himself, much less for others in his most carefully worded definitions." On the contrary I rejoice in the anchorage of both these definitions either of which for the work intended holds true because it has been made by a right method a fair discussion of which the Doctor seems to avoid.

In the first part of the Doctor's next paragraph we read: concerning the incomplete definition he took the liberty to print: "This as will be observed was not accompanied by any qualification. It was an unqualified reply to an unqualified question. It was taken as Brother Waring's definition of inspiration after his full discussion of the subject in public."

"As will be observed" this definition as the Doctor gives it, is "not accompanied by any qualification." As the Doctor gives it it is certainly "an unqualified reply to an unqualified question" because he has taken it out of its connection with the questions, answers and general discussion of the class. It certainly ought to be "taken" as my definition but not out of connection with the "full discussion of the subject in public." I protest strongly against its being taken out of its connections and represented, without qualifications, as my definition. In our discussion in the class and in the Doctor's presence it was emphasized again and again that our purpose was to get a view that would commend itself to the growing numbers who cannot receive that view of the Bible and its inspiration that means the assumption of inerrancy; i. e., the view with which the Doctor was so largely instrumental in blocking for a time the work of the class.

In the last part of the paragraph and what follows it the Saundersian method of insinuation and omission is very clearly seen. The Doctor's words are: "I want in the first place to show the striking resemblance between this definition and the views of a number of living ministers as given below." Doctor Saunders then quotes from six, telling the denomination to which they belong thus: "Unitarian," "another Unitarian," "a very distinguished Unitarian," "another Unitarian," "Unitarian minister of Boston, formerly a Free Baptist minister," "Ah! another Unitarian."

As the readers of the MESSENGER AND VISITOR need not be told what this so manifestly suggests even though the Doctor should repeat that it is not "necessarily" so, let me point out what may not be so readily seen namely, what Doctor Saunders omits. (1) He omits quotations from the writings of those who are not Unitarians—quotations having a "striking resemblance" to my definition. These would have left an altogether different impression. Did the Doctor omit them ignorantly or purposefully? To prevent the readers of our paper from being further prejudiced